



ZHU YUNRONG

36, General Manager, shipping and offshore division, China Minsheng Trust

Career: Maritime law China and UK; 2006 broker BRS; 2009 Minsheng Financial Leasing; 2010 executive director China Merchants Bank Financial Leasing

Zhu Yunrong (Emma Zhu) heads a four-woman investment team that is an active buyer of ships and corporate shipping assets. A fifth woman will soon join the team.

Zhu has acquired a fleet of 22 secondhand and newbuilding vessels since she set up the trust's shipping operation. Despite having recruited some male talent with shipping and finance backgrounds, Zhu says her male hires have all found the work too tough and quit.

She says that around half of top management at China Minsheng Trust are women.

"Luckily, you can find more and more women with a strong voice in the shipping industry in China," Zhu tells TradeWinds.

Few are at the C level yet but that is a matter of generational change. "Someday they will even dominate the industry. We are a new generation and our world has changed a lot."

She sees similar progress in Norway and in Greece, but she was struck by the complete absence of women on the other side of the table on a five-day visit to Japan in December to meet shipowners, shipbuilders and financiers.

"I could see by their astonished faces that they did not expect they would be meeting with two young ladies," she says, but adds that her team was well received.

In China, she feels men and women face similar challenges, especially outside the technical management divisions of shipowning companies, where the requirement for seafaring experience results in an unbalanced recruitment pool.

"I never met people who doubted my ability because I am a woman. I think I am as strong as a man, but I think that I should keep my feminine advantages," she says.

Men or women seeking shipping industry careers should believe in themselves and their vision of the future, but she advises women to exploit sides of themselves where she believes women excel.

"Women are often better at listening to others and communicating smoothly with others, but also at insisting on what they believe in. We are more patient, we have more soft manners, and we are better at compromises."

Female faces forge path for tomorrow's talent

Women in maritime speak of their experiences and have some advice for business leaders looking for an edge, writes Lucy Hine

Shipping's lack of women in senior executive roles is well-documented but some have made it through the glass ceiling and others are following in their wake.

In a focus on gender in the maritime sector, which is echoed in the new issue of our quarterly magazine TW+, TradeWinds has spoken to a number of women working across sectors of the shipping industry around the world who are at different stages in their careers.

The aim was to hear from female voices in positions of authority who — on the whole — have not entered the business through family connections, and chart their views on how open the industry has been to them.

Some had much to say on their experiences — what has helped them reach their current positions — and almost all have at least a few words of advice for business leaders or those women who might look to follow in their footsteps.

Not everyone TradeWinds approached or spoke with was keen to participate. Some, who kindly agreed to, made it clear that they

did not want the attention to be on gender but more on their achievements and the way they work.

Many spoke of positive male role models and mentors, the importance of promoting on merit not simply gender but also the need to encourage more women into the industry.

Some highlighted the strengths women bring to the table — along with a few less attractive attributes of their male colleagues.

Several said there is a new generation of women coming through who they think will bring change to the shipping industry and its somewhat hidden career paths.

And running throughout was the reflection that it might be shipping that has the bigger challenge, rather than women.

"Any company or business that's not able to recruit [from] 50% of the population has a big problem, so we shouldn't take the approach of trying to convince companies of what women can bring to the table," said Shearwater GeoServices CEO Irene Waage Basili.

"It's actually about turning it around and asking what challenges will a business face if they're not able to recruit from 100% of the population."

Contributions by: Irene Ang, Michael Angell, Jonathan Boonzaier, Joe Brady, Julian Bray, Adam Corbett, Geoff Garfield, Darrin Griggs, Michael Juliano, Ian Lewis, Eric Martin, Jim Mulrenan, Harry Papachristou, Andy Pierce and Bob Rust



From left:

Barbara Holland (page 29), Garvey Schubert Barer; Agnes Choi (page 27), IUMI; and Tina Liu Qianwen (page 28), Elane Inc



KARIN ORSEL

48, CEO, MF Shipping

Career: Started in shipping in 1988; established MF Shipping in 1994, aged 23, becoming majority shareholder in 2001

Karin Orsel says women have to be more proactive — and she practises what she preaches.

A former president of Women's International Shipping & Trading Association, WISTA, she says: "We should be more visible ourselves."

"By stepping-up and having an organisation in place for mentorship for young women in the industry, you can make a difference."

Orsel, who in 2013 became the first female vice-chairman of the International Chamber of Shipping and is co-chairman of Royal Netherlands Shipowners' Association, plays down the importance of gender on her career, saying that she has hardly ever experienced problems.

She is also confident that the next generation of women in their 30s are already entering the industry, and that the changing nature of the workplace — with a focus on digitisation and the environment — may attract more women.

"I think our global challenge is how to attract the next generation. Because our industry has had an image problem. It's only by stepping-up and making bold decisions — like what the industry agreed upon with the CO2 discussions — that you show the world you are becoming a more attractive industry to work for."

She concedes that there are not many women at senior level. "Of course there are challenges, but compared with many years ago we've made a lot of progress."



KIERSTIN DEL VALLE

27, Manager of maritime policy, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

Career: Lake Union Drydock Co, Seattle; assistant to safety officer onboard Bahamas Celebration; naval architect at Knud E Hansen in Denmark; technical manager CLIA

Kierstin Del Valle says the challenges she faces in the male-dominated maritime industry have more to do with how to work with others, regardless of gender.

"When the preferred method of work and communication is not necessarily in line with my own, I consider it important to adapt my style to better accommodate timely completion of the item being worked on," she says.

Del Valle develops CLIA policy for and negotiates industry positions with regulatory bodies, other industry associations and foreign governments. Specifically, she leads matters related to polar operations, cyber risk management and training.

She says gender balance at the senior level is better than in other industries but it could be improved further through more marine-related degree programmes.

"It may not be an instantaneous shift, but as more and more women pursue maritime degrees, the more even the applicant pool will be," she adds.

She encourages women looking to go into the maritime industry to consider a wide variety of jobs. "For those who appreciate a sense of adventure, perhaps sailing as an officer or an engineer is the preferred route," she says.

"For those who like communications, they can consider a shoreside role doing just that."



REBECCA DYE

66, Commissioner, US Federal Maritime Commission

Career: US Coast Guard academy; USCG chief legal office; US Congress

Entering the maritime industry is "the best thing I have ever done", says Rebecca Dye.

"I love the maritime industry. The more I speak with leaders in the industry, the more I respect them and the work they do."

There were almost no female role models to follow in Dye's early career. But her mentors focused on her capabilities and she made sure to prove them out in every instance.

"I had my share of awkward situations. Every sponsor in my career has been a man, but I was always fortunate to find great mentors."

Now as a mentor to others, she says women are "thriving" at US maritime service academies, which means a new generation will enter the industry at some point.

Those individual efforts will make the biggest difference to right gender balances, she says.

"I don't really think women can succeed apart. We can only succeed together."

"I am always pleased to see men at events billed as women's leadership events," she says.

"Plenty of men get it, but I am not sure there should be much difference in how you approach leadership."

As for career advice, Dye believes it comes from taking up the challenges that come your way.

"The best advice I heard was don't chase your passion, but follow your opportunity."

BARBARA HOLLAND

63, Principal, Garvey Schubert Barer

Career: Harvard Law School after working as a paralegal in Rhode Island; joined law firm Garvey Schubert Barer in 1981

Lawyer Barbara Holland

was attracted to maritime at an early age. Growing up in Michigan, she remembers watching ships pass by on Lake Superior and through the Soo Locks.

Holland got her first job as a lawyer at Seattle firm Garvey Schubert Barer, where shipowners Tote and Cosco were already clients, and never turned back.

She is involved in a range of areas in the fishing and shipping industries and advises shipowners in coast guard investigations. She is also on the firm's 24-hour casualty response team, and provides advice to clients facing potential liability for pollution incidents.

She is also involved with the US Maritime Law Association, where she was recently elected as second vice president and some predict she is on a path to become its president.

Holland says women interested in a career in maritime law should learn as much as they can about the industry.

"Spend time with the people who are operating the vessels and the terminals and the shipyards. Develop relationships with the regulators and the legislators whose actions affect the industry," she says.

"Go to federal court and watch a trial or argument involving maritime law issues. And of course, talk to lawyers who practice maritime law to find out what it is like and why they chose it."

MAITE BOLIVAR KLARUP

48, General Manager, Bimco South East Asia

Career: Degree in hotel management; liner traffic manager, Nordana, Denmark, and Houston; MBA in shipping and logistics; senior executive corporate communications, Thome Ship Management

Maite Bolivar Klarup joined Bimco in 2016 and represents the organisation in Singapore and key shipping states in South East Asia.

She says women in shipping prefer nothing more than a level playing field. "We don't aim to be treated differently. We merely want to be able to compete freely and fairly and be recognised for our work and contribution to the industry."

"It gives so much positive energy and inspiration when you meet women with such engagement and energy, excited to go the extra mile for the industry and their carriers. Some times you need to see someone who is a little more like yourself to see that reaching higher is possible."

Bolivar Klarup says shipping should give more visibility to the younger generation.

She adds that it is also important for women to take responsibility for developing their own careers. "There are lots of interesting opportunities out there and it is important that young women seize the opportunities and assume accountability for their careers."

"Shipping is a great industry and I am very proud to be a part of it."



JULIE VAN 'T HOFF

34, Managing Director, Van Uden Shipping, Rotterdam

Career: Started as receptionist, promoted to finance assistant, on to sales, and manager within Van Uden group

"I have spent the majority of my career working in the maritime industry — a world historically dominated by men," says Julie van 't Hoff.

"In general, men are very straightforward, no nonsense and results-oriented and that fits well with my character, attitude and our business culture at Van Uden Shipping."

"I was fortunate to be promoted fairly quickly early in my career, and often found myself to be the only woman during management meetings and when dealing with clients."

"If I need to give advice to any woman to be successful in our industry, I would say it all starts with a firm belief in yourself. Be assertive, authentic and focus on the things within your control."

"A lot of women find it difficult to accept that men often tend to dominate the conversation. In my mind, the solution is not to become louder, more aggressive or more belligerent than men. Instead, find your own ways to add value, build relationships and create new opportunities."

"Last but not least — be sure to communicate your career aspirations to your manager and those higher up. Don't wait for someone to ask you!"

